

Hobbies

You'll never make a mint on coins that you have 136 of; spend them all

By Roger Boye

Here are answers to more questions from Chicago Tribune readers.

Q—A few months ago I heard that quarters without mint marks are worth at least \$100 each. Since then, I've received in change 136 such coins, all from the late 1960s and the 1970s. Where can I go to cash them in?

B. M., Lombard

A—Spend them! Quarters made in Philadelphia before 1980 aren't supposed to have mint marks. Millions of such coins dated between 1965 and 1979 still circulate, and specimens worn from use have no special value as collectibles.

Since 1980 Uncle Sam has put a "P" on the front sides of Phila-

delphia-minted quarters, but the letter is missing from some of the coins made earlier this year because of a problem in the production process. Philadelphia coin dealer Harry J. Forman was selling such coins in uncirculated condition for \$99.50 and buying them for \$80 each, according to a recent advertisement in Numismatic News. But some experts believe that prices will drop once the fad of owning such quarters wears off.

Q—I think I've hit the jackpot. One of the 1989 proof sets I bought from the U.S. Mint has two dimes and no Lincoln cent. How much might the set be worth?

Y. H., Chicago

A—Such packaging errors usually add just a small amount to the retail value of U. S. proof

sets. For example, a "normal" 1989 set with five coins—cent thru half dollar—goes for about \$10.50 on the hobby market; your set might fetch from \$12 to \$15.

Q—What's an acceptable premium over the gold value to pay for fees and commissions when buying the one-ounce American Eagle gold coins?

F. D., Crystal Lake

A—The fees probably will vary from about 5 to 8 percent, depending on the number of coins you want and the dealers with whom you do business. Most dealers buy the one-ounce coins for gold value plus at least 3 percent.

Q—Can you recommend a book that would help us evaluate coins from 26 countries as well as \$200 worth of old U. S. silver

coins?

J. F., Chicago

A—"Standard Catalog of World Coins" by Chester L. Krause and Clifford Mishler lists the retail prices—in up to four condition categories—of nearly every coin minted in the world since 1801. The 1990 edition is well worth the \$34.95 price, in part because thousands of pictures make coin identification relatively easy.

The 1,856-page book is sold in many coin shops or can be ordered from the publisher, Krause

Publications, 700 E. State St., Iola, Wis. 54990. To place a credit-card order, call, toll free, 800-258-0929.

Q—I've read an advertisement for medals made by a "leading private mint." What does that term mean?

R. E., Harvey

A—Private mints are nongovernment companies that make medals or similar metallic objects. Some private mints have produced foreign coins, but under law, only Uncle Sam can issue U. S. money.